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# Consumer Characteristics Affecting Attitude towards Private Label among Residents in Bangkok, Thailand

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**Abstract**
This research aims to 1) to study the how each type of consumer characteristics influenced attitudes towards private label products among Thai consumers, 2) to study the differences of the attitude towards private label products impacted by consumer socio-demographics (income) among Thai consumers, 3) to study the relationship between the attitude towards private label products and intention to buy them in three product categories (Food, Apparel and Grocery).The main focus in this study is only four of consumer characteristics including Price, Quality, Value consciousness and Financial Constraints. Both quantitative and qualitative methods were used in the study. Qualitative method was initially conducted to collect the data before designing the questionnaire, while quantitative method was used by questionnaire to collect the primary data for this research. Online questionnaires were distributed to 240 samples in Bangkok. Correlation, Multiple Regression and Independent T-Test analysis were adopted to investigate and interpret the results from the online survey. The findings of the study show that quality consciousness, value consciousness and financial constraints are strong predictors for the attitude towards private label products for Thai respondents. Value consciousness and financial constraints showed positive relationship, while quality consciousness revealed negative relationship on attitude towards private label products. Moreover, attitude towards private label products was found out to be important background factors which affect the intention to buy private label products in food, grocery and apparel for the samples. Furthermore, the result shows that income are related to attitude towards private label products.
**Keywords:** Private label brands, consumer characteristics, attitude towards private label products, intention to buy private label products.

## 1. Introduction

Private label products are a line of product labeled by a retailer under a single brand identity. They share a similarity to the concept of home brands in Australia and own brands in the UK. They are distinct in that a private labels are managed solely by the retailer for sale in only a specific chain of store. The retailer will design types of goods, packaging and marketing of the products in order to create the relationship between the products and the store's customer base. Private labels are generally cheaper than national-brand products, because the retailers can maximize the production to suit consumer demand in their stores and also cut down advertising costs. Moreover, products sold under a private label brand are subject to the same regulatory oversight as products sold under a national brand.

In Thailand, Tanthansakul (1999) investigated that the private label brand have been existed for many decades. Traditional retailers (Mom-and-Pop shop) launched their private label brand in Generics with low quality, low price and no specific package brand image. But in the last decade, private label products were developed in the strategic planned for some famous department stores in Bangkok, such as MBK, The Mall, Central and etc. The retailers in Thailand changed their brand strategy by focusing on private label products in both expanding varieties of category and increasing the budget for their private brand advertisements (Tanthansaku, 1999), because private label products generate significantly higher contributions to retailers than manufacturers' brands do (Ailawadi and Harlam, 2002). Despite the lower prices, retailers enjoy gross margins on private label brand that are about 5-50 percent higher than manufacturer brand margins(Silverstein and Hirschohn, 1994), especially at the economic recession and political crisis period. However, the successful penetration rate is still low with less than 8%, while Europe leads the international scene in terms of market share; in Switzerland for example, the market share of private-label brands reached 45%, in Spain and United Kingdom accounted 41%. North America also has experienced dramatic growth, though it remains lower than the European level. (Neilsen report 2014).

## 2. Objectives

2.1 To study the differences of the attitude towards private label products in each type of consumer characteristics among Thai consumers.

2.2 To study the attitude towards private label products effected by consumer socio-demographics (income) among Thai consumers.

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2.3To study the relationship between the attitude towards private label products and intention to buy them in three main product categories (Food, Apparel and Grocery)

2.4 To provide recommendations for Thai retailers to balance the store brand products and national brand products

**3. Research Questions**

The research main objective is to understand consumer characteristics that affect consumer attitude towards private label products and purchasing intention among residents in Bangkok, Thailand. Therefore, the research question is "How consumer characteristics (price consciousness, quality consciousness, value consciousness and financial constrains) affect attitude towards private labels and intention to buy them in 3 main product categories (Food, Apparel and Grocery) among Thai consumers?"

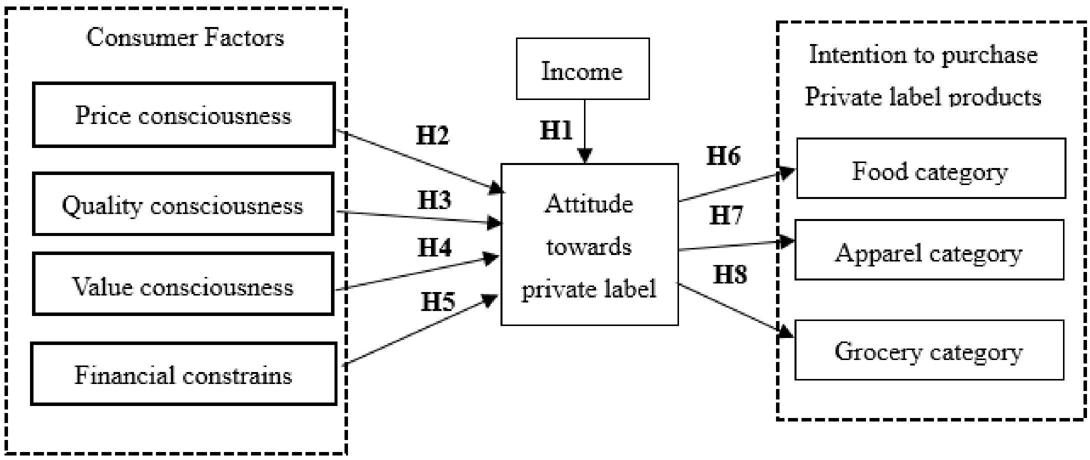
**4. Significance of the Study**

It is important for retailers to explore the possibilities of roping the customers to stores and trying to understand the insight factors of the consumers' attitude by studying the possibilities of relationship variables with the consumer characteristics, consumer socio-demographic and attitude towards private label products. This will lead to explore the association of variables such as consumer characteristics and attitude towards private label products etc., and will finally create intention to buy them. As Consumer Attitude towards Private Labels in three main product categories (Food, Apparel and Grocery) among Thai consumers in this research, which in turn will help the retail marketing team to take some strategic decisions to create higher tangible and intangible value to the private label products that later will expand the product line in portfolio (in the same categories) and help maximize the total contribution of the store revenue. Moreover, manufacturers can focus on how to position and retain to manufacturer brand to non-attracted consumers.

**5. Conceptual framework**

Figure 1 visually illustrates the research model identifying four consumer characteristics (price consciousness, quality consciousness, value consciousness and financial constraints) factors among Bangkok residents which influence the attitude towards private label brands and influence the intention to purchase them. Model anticipates that consumer characteristics will attitude towards private label products, and then attitude towards private label products will affect the intention to purchase them.

**Figure1:** Conceptual framework exhibits relationships of all variables for Thai respondents




**6. Hypothesis**

**H1:** Income will have negative relationship with attitude towards buying private label products among Thai consumers.

**H2:** There is relationship between price consciousness and attitude towards private label products among Thai consumers.

**H3:** There is relationship between quality consciousness and attitude towards private label products among Thai consumers.

**H4:** There is relationship between value consciousness and attitude towards private label products among Thai consumers.

**H5:** There is relationship between financial constraints and attitude towards private label products among Thai consumers.

**H6:** There is relationship between attitude towards private label products and intention to buy private label product in food category among Thai consumers.
**H7:** There is relationship between attitude towards private label products and intention to buy private label product in grocery category among Thai consumers.
**H8:** There is relationship between attitude towards private label products and intention to buy private label product in apparel category among Thai consumers.

## 7 Methodology

### 7.1 Topic Selection

As mentioned in the background that private label products are popular among consumers in western countries, but it still experienced slow growth and underdeveloped and relatively new among some of the Thai consumers. Even though, private label brands in Thailand was launched into the market for decades, but the response rate is still not so satisfied for the retailers.

In Thailand, Bangkok is the main focus of this study, there are many foreign retailers and domestic operated in this city. For instance TESCO-LOTUS which is operated by a British company, Carrefour which is operated by a French company and Big C Superstore operated by a Thai company. Moreover, Bangkok is full of multi-social class of people. Therefore, this research is to study Thai consumer attitude towards private label brands by focusing on a specific range of ages and incomes. The residents only in Bangkok are targeted due to time constraint of spreading the questionnaires. Plus, there are 8.426 million people in Bangkok which accounted 13% of total population in Thailand (Source: CIA World Factbook2015) and there are 4.89 million people who are the real target (more than 18 years old).

### 7.2 Research method

In order to answer research question, the author decided to conduct the research by combining the use of both quantitative method and qualitative method to collect the data will be applied into this research. The survey questionnaire as the quantitative method is selected. The interview is used as the qualitative method to approve questionnaire items. To clarify, the questionnaire is the main method with the interview's answers to support and exemplify the results from questionnaires. Since the objective of this research is to find the attitude towards the private label products which needs to emphasize on important factors that affect consumer's attitude. Consequently, both of qualitative and quantitative methods are the most appropriate methods in order to answer research question.

### 7.3 Data collection

Focused group interview by using questionnaire as a tool to conduct a survey in order to gather ideas of the interviewees. Data analysis of the group interview is done by judging the information obtained from the interviews. On the other hand, for the analysis of the query, descriptive statistics technique is used through SPSS program in order to analyze. A method used in this interview is a non-probable sampling by a judgment sampling which is randomizing from the residents in Bangkok. After considering about the suitability of a data collection, 20 residents in Bangkok were decided to collect preliminary information. The interview would go on by discussing and exchanging opinions on private label products through the moderator. Then, the results of the discussion would be processed as a summary of the interview. However, because the group interview was small the results of the interview could not be taken to refer to the larger group of population. Therefore, the researcher would just use the group interview as the beginning of a further quantitative research. Questionnaire is the most appropriate method for collecting primary data in a quantitative manner. The author used a convenient sample of relevant population who could respond to the questionnaires. Also, the author used Microsoft Excel which is generally used as statistical software, to process and formulate the collected data from questionnaires. The findings of the questionnaire will be explained by tables in the findings part.

### 7.4 Sampling size determination

Owing to the time, budget constraints and also the largeness of the target population; it is difficult to study the entire population. Therefore, in this study, a particular sample was chosen from a target population. The target population is Thai residents who live and study in Bangkok with the age ranged from 18-30, 31-40, 41-50, 51-60 and more than 60 years old. The reason behind choosing this target sample is that they are likely to have their own income and expected to spend money on buying the three focal product categories. Non-probability sampling method was also applied, because there was limitation of time and budget to collect the data. Even though Ghauri and Gronhaug (2010, P. 139) stated that it is impossible to make valid inferences about the population from non-probable samples. Moreover, it is supported by Bryman and Bell (2011, p. 190) that "non-probability sampling cannot provide definite findings to be generalization but they could provide a springboard for further research or allow links to be gorges with existing findings in an area". However, non-probability samples can be used in qualitative research to understand and create explanations (Ghauri & Gronhaug, 2010, p. 139). In addition, the use of non-probability sampling can provide findings and results that could be benefit for further research.

7.5 Variables of research
The structural model of testing the attitudes toward private label products' elements on the purchase intention in three main product categories will consist of a set of exogenous variables and a set of endogenous variables, as below:

- Independent variables are the variables with no causal links leasing to them from other variables in the regression model. The independent variables in this study includes: Income, Price Conscious, Quality Conscious, Value Conscious and Financial Constrains
- Dependent variables in regression model are the variables with causal links distinguished them from other variables, so that dependent variables have explicit causes within the model. The dependent variables in this study include: Attitudes toward buying private label products and purchase intention in Food, Grocery and Apparel Category

7.6 Methods of spreading the questionnaires
The 240 questionnaires was distributed to targeted area which were given to residents in Bangkok via online spreadsheet called google online questionnaire. Moreover, the author reached the target samples to respond to the questionnaire from social networking cites such as Facebook by posting the URL on the respondents‟ wall, and email by sending the URL to the respondents‟ emails. By using online communities, the author could share URL and the respondents could easily click the URL and it led them automatically to the questionnaire. The author provided instruction of how to do the questionnaire at the beginning of the third part of the questionnaire tested the attitude of the consumers towards private label products. The respondents could easily follow the instruction and did the questionnaires. When the respondents finished answering the questionnaires, they could easily press the submit button at the end of page and the results will be automatically kept by the website. The results from the questionnaires were summarized into tables by the website and could directly log in to check and bring out the data to process.

7.7 Reliability: Pre-testing of the Questionnaire
In order to ensure reliability of the findings data from questionnaire and to measure the validity and consistence of the questionnaire, the preliminary test by using questionnaire as a tool to conduct a survey in order to capture any ambiguous questions and confuse questions that the respondents could encounter while they answer the questionnaire. These respondents were members of target populations but they were not included in the final sample. Moreover, in order to assure that the Likert Scales measurements were appropriate used to measure variables in accordance with the stated conceptual framework. An Internal Consistency Method was conducted to test the reliability of those measurements. Data analysis of the group interview was done by judging the information obtained from the interviews. On the other hand, for the analysis of the query, descriptive statistics technique was used through SPSS program in order to analyze. A method used in this interview is a non-probable sampling by a judgment sampling which is randomizing from the residents in Bangkok. After considering about the suitability of a data collection, the researcher decided to collect information from 20 post graduate students in Thailand. However, because the group interview was small, so that the results of the interview couldn't be taken to refer to the larger group of population. Therefore, the researcher just used the group interview as the beginning of a further quantitative research.

All dependent variables-Price consciousness, Quality consciousness, Value consciousness and Financial constraints for Thai has higher Cronbach's alpha requirement which as 0.70. The rest of dependent variables – Attitude towards private label products, Intention to buy private label product (Food category), Intention to buy private label product (Grocery category), and Intention to buy private label product (Apparel category). The Cronbach's alphas for both experiments are also all satisfying in terms of their reliability, therefore the primary sets of items within those variables stayed also the same.

**Table1:** Cronbach's alpha reliability for Thai respondents

| | Variable | No. of items | Cronbach's alpha |
|---|---|---|---|
| Independent | Price consciousness | 3 | 0.78 |
| | Quality consciousness | 3 | 0.78 |
| | Value consciousness | 3 | 0.71 |
| | Financial constraints | 3 | 0.74 |
| Dependent | Attitude towards private label products | 6 | 0.86 |
| | Intention to buy private label product (Food category) | 3 | 0.91 |
| | Intention to buy private label product (Grocery) | 3 | 0.89 |
| | Intention to buy private label product (Apparel) | 3 | 0.91 |

**8. Results**

8.1 Descriptive statistics

Table 2 shows the short summary of descriptive statistics is provided in which identifies the basic characteristics of data and summary of measurements. It can be noted that respondents have strongest pattern for value consciousness with the highest mean of 4.83, while financial constraints is the lowest pattern (mean=3.87). Also value consciousness was most evaluated the highest with their mode score of 5.00.

**Table 2:** Summary descriptive statistics for Thai respondents.

| | | | | | | | Intention to buy private label products | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Income | Price conscious | Quality conscious | Value conscious | Financial constraints | Attitude | Food | Grocery | Apparel |
| N | 240 | 240 | 240 | 240 | 240 | 240 | 240 | 240 | 240 |
| Missing | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Mean | 2.30 | 4.53 | 4.38 | 4.83 | 3.87 | 3.53 | 3.77 | 3.77 | 3.47 |
| Median | 2.00 | 4.67 | 4.67 | 5.00 | 4.00 | 3.50 | 4.00 | 4.00 | 3.67 |
| Mode | 2.00 | 4.00 | 4.67 | 5.00 | 3.67 | 3.17 | 4.00 | 4.00 | 4.00 |
| Std. Deviation | 1.16 | 0.95 | 0.91 | 0.81 | 0.93 | 0.82 | 1.12 | 1.01 | 1.10 |

8.2. Regression summary

The first regression analysis determines the impact of monthly income of Thai consumers on the attitude towards private label products. Regression coefficient of variables provided in the Table 3 below are statistically significant ($p=0.000<0.05$). The examination of regression results show that it would be expected a decrease of 0.153 unit of the attitude towards private label product if income would increase by one unit.

The second regression analysis performed the relationship between independent variable- consumer characteristics and dependent variable- attitude towards private label products among Thai consumers. The coefficients for each of the variables (see Table 3) indicate the amount of change one could expect in attitude towards private label products given a one unit change in the value of that variable. Investigating each variable in terms of influence to dependent variable it would be expected an increase of 0.029 in attitude towards private label products for every one unit increase in price consciousness ($p=0.677>0.05$), a decrease of 0.249 in attitude towards private label products for every one unit increase in quality consciousness ($p=0.000>0.05$). The increase of 0.343 in attitude towards private label products would be expected, if value consciousness would be increased by one unit ($p=0.000<0.05$). Financial constraints increase by one unit would be expected to result in attitude towards private label products increasing by 0.138 ($p=0.010>0.05$). However, there are three variables – quality consciousness, value consciousness and financial constraints – are statistically significant, while price consciousness are not. In terms of strength of an influence, variables –quality consciousness and value consciousness have scored the highest, while financial constraints and price consciousness has the lowest. Following the examination of multiple regression model, it can be concluded using formula:

**Table 3:** Regression model summary**:** attitude towards private label products and consumer characteristics

| Hypo thesis | Dependent variable | Potential predictors, identified by multiple regression | B | Beta | T | Sig. | Decision |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| H1 | Attitude towards private label product (Thai consumers) | Income | -0.153 | -0.217 | -3.437 | 0.000 | Confirmed |
| H2 | | Price consciousness | 0.029 | 0.033 | 0.417 | 0.677 | Rejected |
| H3 | | Quality consciousness | -0.249 | -0.277 | -5.014 | 0.000 | Confirmed |
| H4 | | Value consciousness | 0.343 | 0.341 | 4.441 | 0.000 | Confirmed |
| H5 | | Financial constraints | 0.149 | 0.17 | 2.59 | 0.011 | Confirmed |

The third regression analysis shows the influence of the relationship between attitude towards buying private label products among Thai consumers and the intention to buy private label in food category. Regression coefficient of variables provided in the Table 4 below shows that there is statistically significant ($p=0.000<0.05$) between the two variables. The examination of regression results show that it would be expected an increase of 0.526 unit of the attitude towards the intention to buy private label in food category if private label product would increase by one unit.

**Table 4:** Regression model summary: attitude towards private label products and the intention to buy private label product in three main product categories consist of Food, Grocery and Apparel categories.

| H | Dependent variable | Potential predictors | B | Beta | T | Sig. | Decision |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| H6 | The intention to buy private label product in Food category. | Attitude towards private label product(Thai consumers) | 0.526 | 0.383 | 6.388 | 0.000 | Confirmed |
| H7 | The intention to buy private label product in Grocery category. | | 0.695 | 0.562 | 10.487 | 0.000 | Confirmed |
| H8 | The intention to buy private label product in Apparel category. | | 0.549 | 0.598 | 11.524 | 0.000 | Confirmed |

8.3 T-test analysis summary

Since the regression analysis bought to evaluate the consumer variables' influence for attitude towards private label products did not explain the amount in each category of the research samples, it was decided to additionally perform t-test statistics analysis for those variables in order to have better investigation analysis and strengthen the results of executed correlational analysis. The Thai consumer characteristics (price consciousness, quality consciousness, value consciousness and financial constraints) were divided into groups (considering evaluation of 3.5 as an average) which distinguished responses as following: price-conscious (n=206) and price-non-conscious (n=34); quality-conscious (n=199) and quality-non-conscious (n=41); value-conscious (n=231) and non-conscious (n=9); financial constraints (n=157) and non-financial constraints(n=83).

The independent samples t-test analysis shows that the values of the two conditions within one concept of consumer characteristic's Means are statistically different. For example, price-conscious respondents ($\bar{x}$= 3.61) while non-price-conscious respondents ($\bar{x}$= 3.01), which is statistically significant ($p=0.000<0.05$). Non-quality conscious respondents have a better attitude towards private label products ($\bar{x}$= 4.02) rather than quality-conscious respondents ($\bar{x}$= 3.42) this being a statistically significant conclusion ($p=0.000<0.05$). Moreover, value-conscious respondents have better attitude ($\bar{x}$= 3.56) than non-value consciousness ($\bar{x}$= 2.67). In terms of financial constraint respondents have a better attitude towards private label products ($\bar{x}$= 3.70) than financial constraint ones ($\bar{x}$= 3.19) also being a statistically significant finding ($p=0.000<0.05$).

**Table 5:** T-test statistics: differences among groups of consumer factors

| Dependent variable | Hypo thesis | Independent variables | N | Mean | SD | F | Significance (2-tailed) | Decision |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Attitude towards private label products | H2 | Price consciousness<3 | 34 | 3.01 | 0.74 | 0.64 | 0.000 | Confirm |
| | | Price consciousness>=3 | 206 | 3.61 | 0.8 | | | |
| | H3 | Quality consciousness<3 | 41 | 4.02 | 0.89 | 1.14 | 0.000 | Confirm |
| | | Quality consciousness>3 | 199 | 3.42 | 0.77 | | | |
| | H4 | Value consciousness<=3 | 9 | 2.67 | 0.82 | 1.35 | 0.000 | Confirm |
| | | Value consciousness>3 | 231 | 3.56 | 0.8 | | | |
| | H5 | Financial constraints<=3 | 83 | 3.19 | 0.84 | 1.29 | 0.000 | Confirm |
| | | Financial constraints>3 | 157 | 3.7 | 0.74 | | | |

## 9. Discussion

The model constructed in this research has proposed eight relationships in terms of socio-demographic: Income will have negative relationship towards attitude towards buying private label products, and consumer characteristics: the relationship of price consciousness, value consciousness, quality consciousness and financial constraints on attitude towards private label products. And the relationship between the attitude towards private label products and intention to buy private label in three main product categories: food, grocery and apparel.

Four types of consumer characteristics (price consciousness, quality consciousness, value consciousness and financial constraints) were selected to examine in this research. Research results for experiment 1 (Thai consumers) have provided evidence that price consciousness (correlation coefficient=0.357), value consciousness (correlation coefficient=0.418) and financial constraints (correlation coefficient=0.321) have positive relationship with the attitude towards private label products, while quality consciousness (correlation coefficient= -0.194) in the model showed the negative influence.

The intention to purchase private label products for Thai respondents was found to be positively influenced by the attitude towards private label products in all three main product categories, grocery showed the strongest relationship with the attitude towards private label product with correlation coefficient at 0.536, followed by food and apparel category with 0.35 and 0.346 respectively.

Results of this research contribute for both retailers and manufacturers, since the private label products in Thailand is less developed compared to western countries, so the retailers should know their consumer characteristics and understand how the market has moved in each period of time, while manufacturer brand, whose market position is experiencing more seriously threatened by private label products, need to understand the segments that are not attracted to private label products and try to develop strategies to maintain the products on the shelves.

## 10. Limitation

The area of conducting research was only in the province of Bangkok. Hence, the results of the research must be cited carefully because of such attitudes does not cover people in other areas of Thailand. At last, for the questionnaire, the volume of question items were not too much, in this questionnaire only focus on some most important items, it will make the respondents more concentration to finish the whole set of questions. But some items still have significant relation with variables, it also can affect the test result.

## 9. Future study and conclusion

9.1 Based on the questionnaire, questionnaire of the future research should extend more area, the volume of question items should increase, and it also can recruit more research respondents to increase research validity. Additionally, it could be more categories of private label product categories such as Electronic devices, cosmetics, home décor and so on. Moreover, due to the increase in number of variety of the private label in the recent years.

9.2 This study has not addressed how to deliver and implement strategy to achieve the better level of purchase intention in each category very clearly. Therefore, for the further research, it necessary to the researchers pay attention to how the retailers implement the strategy to increase the purchase intention of private label brand in each category.

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